Shift Work – Hospitality Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The hospitality industry runs on a 24/7 clock, meaning shift work is practically built into the DNA of most jobs. This can range from morning housekeepers to late-night bartenders, with some roles even having split shifts. While it offers flexibility for some, it can also disrupt sleep schedules and make planning your social life a challenge.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

In the hospitality industry, shift work refers to any work schedule that falls outside of the typical 9-to-5 workday. This is because hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality businesses need to be staffed 24/7 to serve customers. This can include:

- **Early mornings:** Housekeepers typically start before dawn to prepare rooms for check-in.
- **Late nights:** Bartenders, servers, and security personnel may work until the early hours of the morning, especially on weekends.
- **Split shifts:** Some roles might have a broken schedule with a gap in the middle of the day.
- **Rotating schedules:** You might switch between mornings, evenings, and nights from week to week.

While shift work allows hospitality businesses to operate around the clock, it can come with some safety disadvantages:

- **Fatigue:** Working non-traditional hours disrupts your natural sleep cycle, leading to fatigue. This can impair judgment and reaction time, and increase the risk of accidents, especially with tasks involving lifting, cleaning chemicals, or operating machinery.

- **Reduced alertness:** Working late nights or early mornings can make you drowsy, increasing the risk of slips, trips, and falls.
- **Lone working:** Some hospitality roles, like night auditors or security guards, may involve working alone. This can be a safety concern, especially if there's a security risk or medical emergency.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Protecting Yourself While Working Shifts in Hospitality:

Shift work can be tough, but there are ways to minimize the downsides and keep yourself safe and healthy. Here are some tips and recommendations:

Sleep Strategies:

- **Maintain consistency:** Even on off days, try to go to bed and wake up at similar times to establish a regular sleep schedule. This helps regulate your body's natural sleep-wake cycle.
- **Optimize your sleep environment:** Make your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool. Use blackout curtains, earplugs, and a white noise machine if needed.
- **Power naps:** If you have a long break between shifts, consider a short nap (20-30 minutes) to improve alertness for your next shift.
- Limit stimulants: Avoid caffeine and alcohol close to bedtime, as they can disrupt sleep quality.

Safety Precautions:

- **Be aware of surroundings:** Especially if working alone at night, stay alert and aware of your surroundings. Report any suspicious activity to a supervisor immediately.
- **Plan your commute:** If working late or early hours, consider arranging safe transportation like rideshare or carpooling with a colleague.
- **Ergonomics:** Many hospitality jobs involve repetitive tasks

or lifting. Practice proper lifting techniques and be aware of your posture to prevent injuries.
- **Report hazards:** Don’t ignore unsafe working conditions. Report any spills, equipment malfunctions, or security concerns to your supervisor.

Lifestyle & Wellbeing:

- **Healthy meals:** Pack nutritious meals and snacks for your shifts. Avoid heavy meals before or during long shifts, as they can make you sluggish.
- **Stay hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout your shift to stay alert and energized.
- **Exercise regularly:** Physical activity helps improve sleep quality and manage stress. Aim for moderate exercise most days of the week.
- **Socialize strategically:** Schedule social activities during your off days or around shifts that allows for some daytime interaction.
- **Stress management:** Find healthy ways to manage stress, such as meditation, yoga, or spending time in nature. Consider talking to a therapist if needed.

Battling sleepiness during a hospitality shift can be tough. Here’s what you can do: First, try to re-energize naturally. Splash cold water on your face, step outside for some fresh air, or stretch lightly. Opt for healthy snacks that give a quick energy boost. If possible, grab a power nap in a quiet corner during a break. Remember, prioritize safety – don’t operate machinery or handle hazardous materials if feeling drowsy. If sleepiness persists, inform your manager and see if adjusted duties or a short break are possible.

FINAL WORD

While shift work offers hospitality’s 24/7 rhythm, prioritize sleep, healthy habits, and safety measures. By understanding your role’s needs and advocating for yourself, you can navigate shift work with greater well-being and thrive in this dynamic industry.